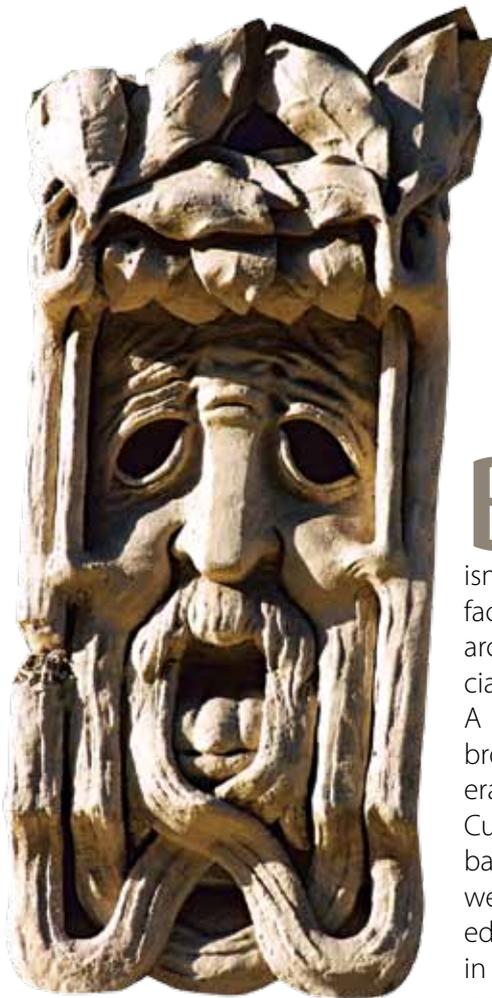


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ART NOUVEAU ARCHITECTURE IN BAKU



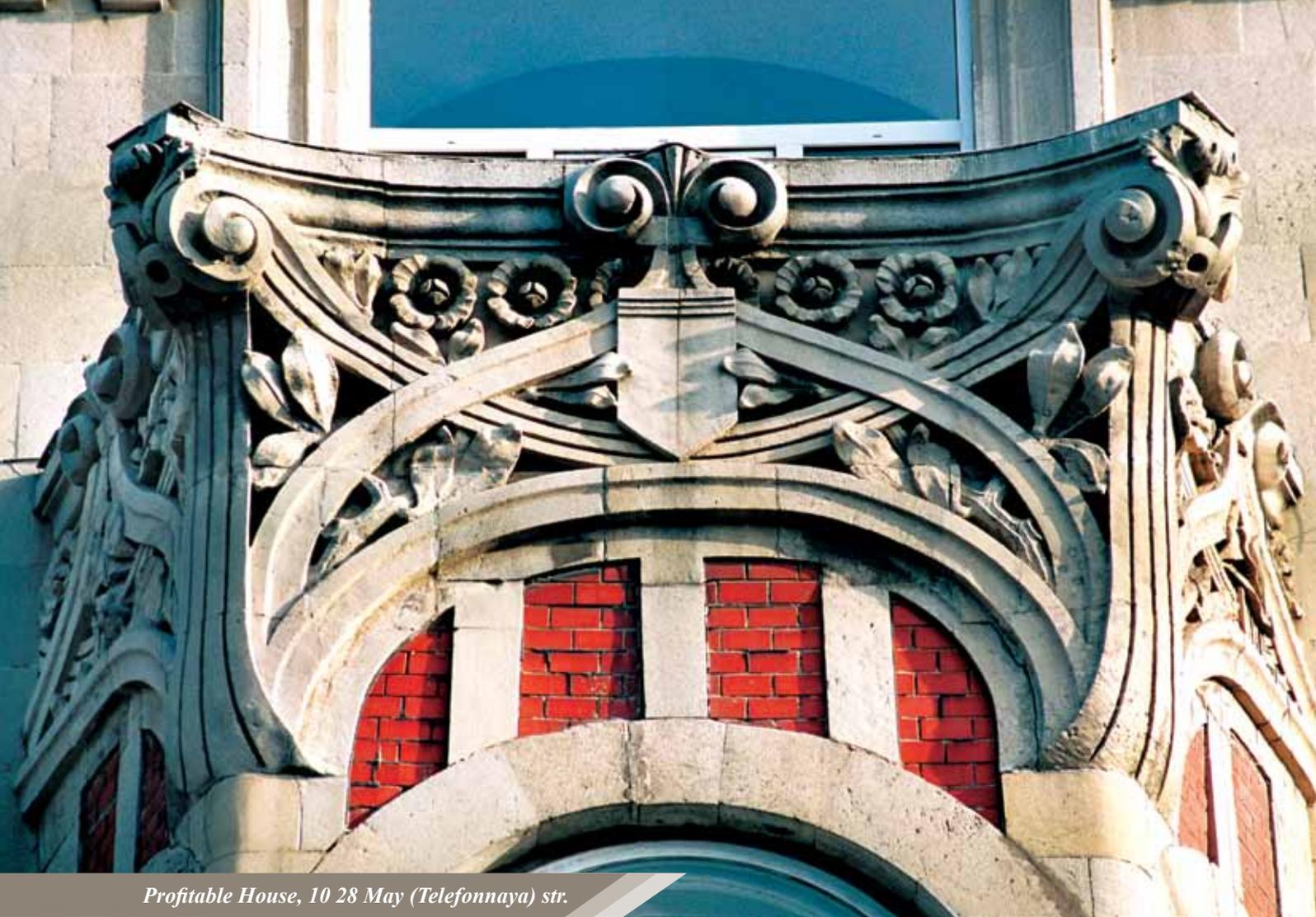
AZERBAIJAN, A RELATIVELY SMALL COUNTRY, IS HOME TO DOZENS OF PEOPLES AND ETHNICITIES, MOST OF WHICH ARE CONSIDERED AUTOCHTHONS OF THE REGION. AMONG SUCH ETHNICITIES THERE IS A NUMBER OF THOSE KNOWN AS THE PEOPLES OF THE SHAHDAG GROUP WHICH REPRESENT ETHNIC FRAGMENTS OF CAUCASIAN ALBANIA.

Baku. The latter half of the 19th century. The oil boom and the establishment of capitalism. Rapid growth of the city. These factors required new “progressive” architecture and new qualified specialists.

A “new” architectural style was brought into being by a new generation of customers and architects. Customers were oil industrialists, bankers and merchants. Architects were a new generation of builders educated at the Academy of Arts in Petersburg and in Europe. This marked the emergence of a new

period in the architecture of Baku, which replaced the “old” medieval architecture. It now reflected European architecture of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was during this period that Art Nouveau entered Baku along with other styles in architecture.

Art Nouveau means “contemporary art”. It spiritualizes daily life, makes utilitarian things masterpieces. At the same time, Art Nouveau is quite multifaceted as it has absorbed the heritage of various cultures, reinterpreting, but not duplicating any of them. Most importantly, every-



Profitable House, 10 28 May (Telefonnaya) str.

thing from façades to small details follows a certain aesthetic trend, a scenario. The basic features of Art Nouveau include the tendency to find comprehensive architectural, design and decorative solutions, an interest in “current” forms that reproduce the rhythms of life, and a prevalence of floral ornaments. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Art Nouveau largely manifested itself through buildings in which West European versions of the style were used. And that was quite natural because founders of a new ornamental style and a new architectural “language” were West European architects. These discoveries were subsequently used by Baku architects as well, who now worked with forms of a new style. Thus, we can say



Fragment of building No 5 on T. Aliyarbeyov Street (Milutinskaya Street, former building of the Tiflis Commercial Bank).

with confidence that Art Nouveau entered Baku from Western Europe. Looking at Art Nouveau buildings of the said period in Baku, we can trace a link between the social status of a property owner and the chosen style. It was thanks to customers that buildings of completely new types and functions appeared in Baku, e.g. public assembly clubs, educational structures, industrial enterprises, banks, houses, etc. The difference in tastes and financial capacity of customers manifested itself through various versions of

Art Nouveau.

Art Nouveau appeared in Baku in the late 1880s (houses No 203, 205 on Safaroglu Street) and existed until 1915 (houses No 215, 219 on Safaroglu Street). Curiously enough, they were built on the same street. Despite a relatively short period, Art Nouveau left a significant mark in the architecture of Baku.

There are over 80 buildings in Baku built in Art Nouveau style. Originally from Europe, it was reflected in details of façade where floral motives

were used on balcony gratings, coatings of windows and doors. Ten years later, Baku architects started to apply Art Nouveau not only to façades, but also to design and space-planning (houses 65 on A. Guliyev Street; 39 on Fizuli Street; office building 24 on U. Hajibeyov Street; bank building on Tagiyev Street, etc.).

If we look at the function of Art Nouveau buildings, we can see that most of them are dwelling houses. However, there are also two schools built in Art Nouveau style, 246 on Mustafayev Street and 66 on Azadlig Avenue, banks, including the Baku branch of the Petersburg Northern Bank (1903-1905) and building No 24 on Hajibeyov Street 24.

While in dwelling houses Art Nouveau was mainly reflected in façade details, in the above-mentioned mentioned public buildings it was also applied to their dimensional and space-planning aspects.

Houses 4, 6 and 10 on 28 May Street (1908-1910, architect I. Ploshko, owner oil magnate Aga Musa Nagiyev), 65 on A. Guliyev Street (1910), 12 and 21 on J. Jabbarli Street, and the said office buildings are graphic examples of Art Nouveau architecture of Baku.

A researcher of the Baku architecture of the capitalist period, Professor Shamil Fatullayev, suggests that a detailed analysis of the buildings constructed in Art Nouveau style and of those bearing certain details and elements of it leads to the conclusion that a whole new touch was introduced to Art Nouveau in Baku during the period of its development (1910-1915).

Art Nouveau, which appeared



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and disappeared quite unnoticeably, left behind some remarkably beautiful buildings that still adorn the city and urge architects to keep on looking for new solutions.

One of the priority directions of Azerbaijan's cultural policy is to preserve the cultural heritage. A decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev **"On the protection of architectural heritage of Baku"** is evidence of the attention the government is paying to the issue. The "Art Nouveau Architecture" exhibition organized by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism has been part of the state policy on the preservation national historical and cultural heritage. In addition to the pictures of buildings and elements of their decor, made available courtesy of Azad Rzayev, a photographer from Khatt company, the exhibition provides information on the owners of the buildings. A multimedia tour enabling to visualize the brilliant phenomenon of European town-planning, Baku Art Nouveau, will be of great interest for visitors as well. 🌟

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House 19 on Mammadaliyev (Poliseyskaya) Str.